

RURAL HIGH-SPEED INTERNET ACCESS TASKFORCE MEETING

**Public Hearing
December 6, 2007
St. Joseph, Missouri**

ATTENDANCE LIST

Taskforce Members

Lt. Governor Peter Kinder
Rep. Joe Aull
Estil Fretwell
David Klindt
Arthur Martinez
Peggy McGaugh
Bill Mitchell (via phone)
Bill Rohde (via phone)
Dan Ross
John Sondag (For Cindy Brinkley via phone)
Tracy Weddle
Michael Zarrilli

Staff Members

Jerry Dowell
Bob Donnelly
Elizabeth Hobbs (via phone)

Witnesses

Tim Allen, St Joe Wireless
Jen Brooks, America Business Products
Dirck Clark, Heartland Health
Darren Farnan, United Electric Cooperative
Tony Ramspot
Mark Webb, Worldwide Technologies, Inc.

Guests

Joyce Herzing, MOREnet
Keith Jones, World Wide Technologies, Inc.
Ewell Lawson, MO Public Utility Alliance
Mark Mabe, Missouri Western State University
Ron Olinger, Missouri Western State University
Scott Swain, CenturyTel
Clinton Thomas, St. Joseph News-Press

1. Welcome and Introductory Remarks - Taskforce Chairman, Lt. Governor Peter D. Kinder

Lt. Governor Kinder called the meeting to order at approximately 12:40 p.m.

2. Roll Call of Members

Lt. Governor Kinder asked the taskforce members present either in person in St. Joseph or via the conference call to state their names for the record.

3. Welcome of New Members

Lt. Governor Kinder welcomed the following new members to the taskforce:

Senator John Griesheimer
Senator Wes Shoemyer
Representative Joe Aull
Representative Mike Dethrow

4. Approval of Minutes from Nov. 27 Meeting

Lt. Governor Kinder asked if there was any discussion on the meeting minutes from the Nov. 27. He then stated he would entertain a motion to approve the meeting minutes. A motion was made and was seconded by Tracy Weddle. The taskforce then voted to approve the Nov. 27 meeting minutes.

5. Update from Bob Donnelly on RFP process

Bob Donnelly noted that instead of a RFP – ‘Request for Price’ they were developing an RFI – ‘Request for Information’. Bob reported the RFI would include such subjects as a broadband deployment and adoption plan to blanket MO with broadband internet access; a comprehensive program that accounts for both local and statewide technology expansion to include portable broadband availability for all Missouri residents and businesses; formation of community leadership teams in every county; DIS broadband inventory maps and a few other things as well. Bob also reported that the RFI sub-committee would be meeting via conference call the next day to work on the RFI. He currently did not have an exact turn-around time estimate.

6. Website update – <http://www.ltgov.mo.gov/ruralhsi/index.htm>

Jerry Dowell reported that there was a link on the Lt. Governor’s webpage for the Rural High-speed Internet Taskforce website. He said all updates on meeting sites and details, all meeting minutes, all documentation that come in to the taskforce, as well as video and the recorded calls.

7. Discussion from members (if any) on Taskforce proceedings

Lt. Governor Kinder asked if any Taskforce members had comments or questions about how the taskforce is proceeding. Bill Rohde stated that at the last meeting he had made a suggestion that the taskforce try to gather information from Connect Nation, Connect Kentucky and possibly some other states regarding any tax incentives, sales tax credits or any such programs that they had implemented. He asked who had volunteered to find the information and asked what the status was. Tracy Weddle stated that she was researching the information, but was not ready to share anything at this date. She said she would get the information out as soon as it was ready.

8. Public Testimony

Lt. Governor Kinder reported that there were 5 people who had indicated in advance that they wanted to testify:

➤ 1st Witness: Dirck Clark of Heartland Health

Mr. Clark testified that availability of reliable broadband internet in rural communities would make it possible for hospitals and healthcare providers to access patient records instantly, which would greatly improve the quality and speed at which diagnosis could be made and in turn improve the quality of care patients would receive.

➤ 2nd Witness: Jen Brooks, America Building Products

Ms. Clark testified that rural broadband internet accessibility would allow their customers in more rural areas to buy merchandise from America Building Products’, and other businesses’, websites more easily and efficiently, which would be of great mutual benefit to customers and business owners.

➤ 3rd Witness: Anthony M. Ramspot, Labadie, Missouri

Mr. Ramspot testified that he moved to Labadie 6 ½ years ago and was told he would be able to receive high-speed internet within 6 months. He reported that he is still waiting and wants to know why.

- 4th Witness: Darren Farnan, United Electric Cooperative in Maryville, MO
Mr. Farnan testified that in the absence of broadband internet access, United Electric Cooperative provides fixed wireless service to their customers as an alternative to dial-up internet service. He reported that for the most part it works well, however there is an increasing problem with wireless frequency disturbances. Mr. Farnan asked that the Taskforce look at different frequencies, possibly in the fixed wireless radio frequencies that could be dedicated to internet service providers, whether on a licensed or unlicensed basis.
- 5th Witness: Tim Allen, St. Joe Wireless
Mr. Allen testified regarding wireless frequency interruption problems and the high cost of equipment and tower rent. He stated he felt the best thing to help wireless internet in rural locations is either licensed or unlicensed channels dedicated to wireless internet providers.

After this testimony was completed, Lt. Governor Kinder asked if there were other witnesses who had not registered. Mark Webb with Worldwide Technologies, Inc. asked to be allowed to testify. Mr. Webb testified that he felt it would be very beneficial to small internet provider businesses if legislation was passed to provide some type of relief, such as 'in-kind' dollars to help meet the expenses associated with tower locations, access points, costly equipment, etc. He felt that state or federal help would enable small providers to grow and expand, which would benefit consumers.

Lt. Governor Kinder thanked all the witnesses. Public testimony ended at 1:30 p.m.

9. Adjournment

Lt. Governor Kinder asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made and seconded. The Taskforce members voted to adjourn. The meeting ended at approximately 1:32 p.m.